RESTORATION REVIEW

I declare non-fellowship with no one who owns the Lord in word and deed. Such is a Christian. If a man confess the Lord Jesus, or acknowledge him as the only Saviour sent by God; if he vow allegiance to him, and submit to his government, I will recognize him as a Christian and treat him as such. — Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist,* (Burnet Edition, Vol. 7, 1930, p. 651).

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Adventures of the Early Church . . .

SYNAGOGUE: CRADLE OF THE ECCLESIA

As our Lord grew up as a boy in Nazareth his life was closely tied to the synagogue, which was then the most important institution in Judaism. The temple was only in Jerusalem, and a poor Jew did well if he visited the holy city a few times in his entire life. If Jesus was in the temple but once, he was in the synagogue every day. His growing years were centered in his home, where he also worked in his father's shop, and in the synagogue, which was his school as well as "church."

The synagogue was also the local court, with its elders sitting as judges. They meted out various punishments, including scourging, as is indicated in Mt. 10:17. The elders would sometimes sentence a penitent to do humiliating things. One wonders if Jesus ever watched as a penitent laid down across the door of the synagogue so that the people could step on him as they entered. We might suspect that even as a boy Jesus would step *over* such a one!

But the synagogue must have provided security for a Jewish child like Jesus. As the sun began to set each Friday, Jesus would hear and surely sometimes watched, as the Chazzan, the servant of the synagogue, climbed to the roof of the synagogue to blow the ram's horn, signaling the coming of the sabbath. Life immediately changed in every devout Jewish home, for the sabbath was rigorously observed. This would include several hours of study and worship at the nearby synagogue, and there would be one in every community that had as many as ten heads of families.

As a very young man Jesus must have often served as a reader in the services, for seven males would usually read, each a few lines from the law and the prophets. Reading was a significant part of the service, and so in time the Christian church had an office of "Reader," being influenced as it was by the synagogue. One early church father, Tertullian, complained that men move too quickly from reader to deacon, while another, Justin Martyr, in describing an early Christian service tells how "the memoirs of the apostles and the writing of the prophets are read." Rev. 1:3, "Blessed is he that reads," is reflective of the old synagogue practice since it refers to *public* reading.

The modern church and Churches of Christ in particular have been remiss in not making more of a meaningful reading of Scripture. One of my most impressive educational experiences was a course in reading while at Princeton Seminary, taught by a gifted teacher of actors who came in from New York once a week for this special course. The first thing he did was to assure the seminarians, most of whom were Presbyterians, that they did not know how to read the Bible publicly. I never forgot his tremendous lessons, most of which he taught us while we attempted to read in his presence. We spent all our time learning to read the Sermon on the Mount. It was amazing! He was not dramatic as you might think, far from it, but interpretive. “You can’t read it right until you know what it is saying,” he would tell us.

The synagogue was something like that. The president, or ruler, of the synagogue would allow only those to read publicly who had learned to do so effectively in the daily school. I’m guessing that young Jesus was an excellent, interpretive reader, and when he afterwards did so in various synagogues, once his call came, it was nothing new to him, as in Lk. 4:16, “He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. “

It is a curious fact that in the New Testament there is more said about *reading* to the church than there is about *preaching* to the church. There is considerable of the former and none of the latter! If we had readers with the skill of old Dr. Wheeler of Princeton, people would hasten to the assembly just to hear the Scriptures come alive. Again, this must be part of what attracted the God-fearers to the synagogues, Gentiles who were interested to Judaism because of its moral teachings. They were part of “the door” that God opened to the Gentiles for the envoys of Christ, as in Acts 16:13: “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen.” So the apostles reached Gentiles in the Jewish synagogues!

The service must have become familiar to a boy like Jesus, and certain prayers and Scriptures must have become a part of him, for the passages would not only be read but explained. The prayer he at last prayed on the cross may have been a child’s prayer as he left home for the synagogue school, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” And this prayer from the Bible was prayed at every evening service: “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation … The lord will reign forever and ever.” Each service began with the saying of the shema: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God!” It went on to say that God is to be loved with all one’s heart. In his teaching Jesus would refer to “the greatest commandment of all” that he always heard in the synagogue as a boy and young man.

There were as many as eighteen prayers used in the service, and the readings we have already mentioned were translated from the Hebrew of the Jewish Scriptures into Aramaic and—even Greek, as need required, by the targumist or translator. Then there was an address or talk by one of the male members. The women were seated separately and sometimes behind a screen and took no leading part. A visiting lay minister might be asked to say a word, and so he might both read and speak. Oddly enough to us, he would stand to read and then sit down to speak! Lk. 4:20 tells how Jesus did just that: he read from the roll of Scripture, closed it, returned it to the attendant, and then sat down. The record says, "and the eyes of all in the synagogue were upon him." He had not yet given the interpretation that got him into trouble, so we may conclude that the audience was transfixed not only by their curiosity about this hometown boy *but by the way he read the Scriptures!* Once seated but still on the platform before them, Jesus expounded on what He had read, applying the prophecy to himself!

There was no professional minister in the synagogue. This gave an itinerant rabbi like Jesus and the apostles a chance to say something. Notice Acts 13:15: "After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, 'Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it'." This made the synagogue a mission field for the apostles.

There was also give-and-take discussions in the synagogue, and if the boy Jesus involved himself with trained rabbis in the temple, we can believe that he was in the middle of the arguments in his hometown synagogue. There was also singing or chanting of hymns and psalms without instrumentation of course! But we can't be sure. They at least used an instrument to call the people to worship.

We may also surmise that Jesus was especially interested in the alms that were collected, for they were for the poor and destitute. The ruler would designate people to distribute such alms. Can't you see Jesus volunteering for such work? There he is knocking at a poor family's door with loaves of bread and a leg of lamb.

As a boy and then a young man (Jesus must have attended synagogue for some 25 years!) he would have been aware of the sparse furnishings: a reading desk, a closet for the scrolls, and the chief seats for the "somewhats." There is evidence that he eyed those special seats through the years, noting the attitude of those who presumed to use them, as in Mt. 23:6: "And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues." If anyone could rightfully demand a place of honor, it was Jesus, but he chose to do things like wash feet instead.

And surely he was impressed by the *Amens* at the close of the ser vice, with everyone joining in, including himself of course. But he may have wondered about the rule that only a rabbi, if one was present, could offer a benediction. I'm guessing that Jesus believed that old Joe, who worked as a smith across from his woodshop, could bless the people as well as any rabbi. But that is the way it was, no rabbi, no blessing. The synagogue was lay run and lay ministered, however, with priests and rabbis treated as visitors. This made the synagogue a teaching institution, a fellowship in the Scriptures, while the temple was for ritual and sacrifices and of course controlled by the priesthood.

These features were all present in the earliest Christian churches. They too were teaching, reading, and discussion fellowships, and there was no priesthood in control. They were all laymen, even the apostles. They dialogued, as in Acts 20:7, where the original Greek implies that it was as in a synagogue, Paul spoke and they discussed. Even the detail of a hearty *Amen!* was in the ecclesia, as in 1 Cor. 14:16: "How can they say 'Amen' if they don't know what you are saying?"

Is not the church today more like the temple than the synagogue in these respects? We have little openness and everything is cut and dried, including a priest in the "pulpit" who preempts any brother who has "a word of exhortation," however able he might be or however significant a visitor. If Jesus Christ visited most any of our churches today, he would have no opportunity to say a word, for we are a church of spectators more than participants. We gather for a performance, not to perform. We come to be ministered to, not to minister. In fact, Jesus would probably be met in the vestibule and asked to leave.

And we don't allow any *Amens* or *Hallelujahs* or *Maranathas* in our church. Maybe the Pentecostals but not us. And discussions along with a presentation? How can folk talk about a sermon when they have slept through it! Sermons? That is one thing absent from either the ancient synagogue or the primitive ecclesia, a sermon by a professional minister.

We can believe that Jesus was especially mindful of the poor lepers who were allowed to enter the synagogue, though only to sit in an isolated chamber. One of the most moving scenes in the New Testament is in Mt. 8:2: "And Jesus stretched forth his hand and touched the leper." It was unthinkable to associate with a despised leper, and to touch one was to be ceremonially unclean.

Elders were the heart of the synagogue's organization, but they apparently did not make all the decisions, for they were joined in their ministry of "fatherly oversight" by ten or twelve of the aged saints of the community. The elders presided over the services, directed the work of the president-ruler and of the Chazzan, who cared for the scrolls of Scripture and kept the premises. The elders of the synagogue were like the elders of ancient Israel, who strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bound up the crippled, and recovered those who strayed, as indicated in Ez. 34:4. This too made its way into the church, whose elders did not rule with force and harshness but like loving shepherds.

If the modern church has lost the simple goodness of the synagogue and ecclesia it may be due in part to architecture. While there was but one temple in Jerusalem there were, according to Josephus, hundreds of synagogues. They were small enough to function as family units, and they could really have "Body life" in their services. In our cavernous real estate holdings we have two strikes against us if we have any intention of cultivating an intimate family fellowship.

Alfred Edersheim, that great Christian scholar who was himself a Jew, wrote: "The synagogue became the cradle of the church. Without it the church universal, humanly speaking, would have been impossible." The cradle of the church! This is an amazing development in the history of salvation, for the synagogue seemed to have arisen more by circumstance than by intention. It was while the Jews were captives in Babylon, away from their temple ritual, that the synagogue arose, by which the *heart* of their faith was preserved. They brought the synagogue back home with them and it has been around ever since, even after the temple was rebuilt.

Since there was no scriptural basis for the synagogue we have an "authority" problem here. There is no evidence that God ever authorized the synagogue. No prophet foretold its coming. There is nothing about the synagogue in the Old Testament. It emerged out of the contingencies of history. We can believe it was by God's providence, but does this not allow for other such "innovations" as changing cultural conditions may require? If God made the synagogue the stepping-stone from the temple to the ecclesia (church) without prescribing it with a "thus saith the Lord," we may need to be less dogmatic with such questions as "Where is that in the Bible?" It is surely not God's intention that everything good and useful for his kingdom on earth is anticipated in the Bible. The Bible simply is not that kind of book. The emergence of the synagogue, that great Jewish institution that became the cradle of the Church of Christ, shows that there can be the ongoing of God's purposes without "book, chapter, and verse" for everything.

If the synagogue was both the cradle of the church and the door for its first evangelistic thrust, then an understanding of and an appreciation for the synagogue becomes a "must" in our efforts to identify the nature of primitive Christianity. — *the Editor*

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UNITY AND FELLOWSHIP: DO WE NEED BETTER TERMS?

A few months back a forum was conducted at Freed-Hardeman College on the subject of unity and fellowship. In listening to the tapes of this forum it is evident that there are still a lot of hangups about what these terms mean. Several speakers used fellowship as if it meant approval or endorsement, such as "I cannot fellowship those who use instrumental music" and "Are we to fellowship premillenialists?" One wonders if such statements really mean *I do not approve of instrumental music in worship* and *I do not believe in premillennialism.*

Surely they cannot seriously argue that fellowship between believers is predicated upon complete agreement on all doctrinal issues. Those who so contend will find that they have differences among themselves over numerous matters related to the Bible, if they do any thinking at all. No two people, not even a man and his wife, will agree on everything! If fellowship is contingent on eye-to-eye unanimity of viewpoint, then who can be in fellowship? If differences are to be allowed (and they have to be allowed if there is to be any fellowship at all), who is to serve as arbiter in determining what differences will be made a "test" and which will not? May we have a pacifist and a militarist in the fellowship? Teetotalers and social drinkers? Voters and non-voters? Smokers and non-smokers? TV addicts and anti-TV addicts?

If complete agreement is necessary for fellowship, or even near complete agreement, why would the Scriptures impose upon us a loving and forbearing attitude in their plea for unity, as in Eph. 4:1-3. Those verses show that we are to "preserve the unity of the Spirit" by way of forbearing love. Forbearance has no meaning except in terms of our differences. I may believe that you are wrong or ignorant or stubborn, but I am to show that love that covers sins and that forbearance that reaches out and accepts you as you are, warts and all. If there is a place for forbearance in unity and fellowship, then there is a place for differences. A forbearing fellowship implies that those who are "right" and those who are "wrong" (each persuasion is convinced of course that the other side is wrong!) will be accepting of each other.

Is this not what Rom. 15:7 means? “Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.” We all know that we were still wrong about a lot of things, and far from perfect, when Christ accepted us, with overflowing mercy and forgiveness. That kind of acceptance is “to the glory of God,” but when we come down hard on each other and demand conformity to our creed, it is to the glory of some party.

Another speaker at the Freed-Hardeman forum in a noble effort to be more accepting of “brothers in error” referred to different levels of fellowship. There is the big “F” Fellowship that embraces all those who are in Christ, and a small “f” fellowship that one has with those within his own smaller circle. And so he graciously accepts those in the Christian Church as within the big “F” Fellowship, for they too are part of the Body of Christ. But he withholds the small “f” fellowship because they use instruments of music.

This may be his way of saying that there can be fellowship without endorsement or approval. We can accept a woman because she is our sister in Christ without approving of all she may believe and practice. But in the light of Scripture it is risky to speak of various levels of fellowship, for there is but one “fellowship of the Spirit” and it is a relationship shared by all who are in Christ *equally.* I have no half-brothers or half-sisters in Christ, and no cousins or second cousins. We are all sisters and brothers in Christ, and “we were called into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

Since fellowship is a relationship we share in Christ it can become richer and richer with the years and it can grow deeper and deeper. We may have a closer fellowship with some than with others, if for no other reason, because *they* are “there” and *we* are “here.” And in our walk together fellowship may sometimes be strained, for we can all be difficult to get along with. But still there is but one fellowship and we are all equal. As in a family where sisters and brothers sometimes quarrel and are closer to some than to others, so in Christ we are all called into the one fellowship as the family of God despite our diversities.

In listening to the Freed-Hardeman tapes I wondered if it would make a difference if each speaker was asked to strike *unity* and *fellowship* from his vocabulary and use other terms. There are so many hangup’s and bugaboos over these terms. Unity seems to conjure up notions of full endorsement and doctrinal conformity, and even “adding them to the church roll.” Fellowship becomes a matter of strict loyalty to “the issues” (which differ from party to party), and even if one is himself faithful to the issues he cannot be fellowshipped if he fellowships anyone who neglects the issues.

Some of these brethren, for example, will not appear on the same program with certain ones deemed disloyal. One couple's application with an adoption agency was rejected because they attended an "anti" Church of Christ, even though they did not agree with its "noninstitutional" interpretation but simply liked the congregation. All this sort of thing in the name of fellowship!

If we called for a moratorium on these terms for a time and forced ourselves to use some synonym, it might change our thinking. If instead of unity we referred to *oneness* it might make a difference, and it might be a better translation, as our Lord's prayer in John 17 indicates. Jesus prayed for oneness: "may they be one even as we are one." We know that "oneness" in a marriage is between two very different people who are far from unanimity of viewpoint. And yet we know that a woman and a man are one because they are of "one heart and one soul" in what really matters. This should be our view of oneness in the church.

Or we might use *acceptance* instead of unity, that great word that we drew from Rom. 15:7. Let us forget the stereotypes about "unity" and simply obey the Scriptures and accept one another as Christ has accepted us. The brethren at Freed-Hardeman were critical of the "unity meetings" going on with Christian Churches, but if those gatherings were no more than an expression of a mutual acceptance of each other — as Christ accepted us — they might be less threatening. Since we claim to be loyal to Scripture, we are to be reminded that the Bible commands us to accept each other with differences and as equals. The context of Rom. 15:7 makes that clear. And herein is the measure of our sin against each other: *We have rejected each other!*

Using some term besides fellowship is no problem, for it may not be the best translation of the Greek *koinonia*. The *New English Bible* translators believed "the shared life" better catches the meaning, and so they render 1 Jn. 1:7 this way: "If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share together a common life." The word fellowship never appears in this version, and it is surely for the better. Such passages as Acts 2:42 are clearer; "They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread and to pray." That is what *koinonia* (fellowship) really means, to share the common life.

We should be able to share life in Christ with all who sincerely seek to follow him. We can more easily forget about "tests of fellowship" when we think in terms of sharing a common life. I am ready to share that life with all disciples of Jesus, with all who respond

to his invitation, “Come, follow me.” The only “tests” are a love for Christ and a sincere effort to be Christlike. All who “take up their cross and follow Christ” can and should share the common life.

As we share the common life together we will grow together, learn together, and make corrections together. And we do not have to wait for someone to reach our level of perfection before we accept him.

The beauty of Christian acceptance is that a person is accepted as he is without any effort to control him. He is allowed to think for himself and to grow in Christ according to his own uniqueness. We are not to make a person over into the likeness of our party creed. Since we are not his master and since “To his own master he stands or falls” (Rom. 14:4), we do not have to serve as his judge. To accept fellow Christians without trying to control them! That is the need of the hour and only that will heal the wounds of division.

It may be that we have difficulty in accepting others because we have never really accepted ourselves, as we are. We thus create an artificial world, a world that never was, a phony world filled with phony people. When we by the grace of God accept ourselves as the sinners that we are, we are then ready to accept all God’s children as they are. — *the Editor*

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The Lawsuit at 6th and Izard Church of Christ …

FREEDOM RIDERS IN LITTLE ROCK

On a recent crisp Sunday morning I attended a special kind of class at the 6th and Izard Church of Christ in Little Rock. It is made up of those who have special interest in the litigation now in progress between opposing forces in that church. They meet and study together as classes usually do, but they have common cause in contending for what they believe to be a basic human right as well as a Christian principle, *the right to know.*

The evening before I was with these same people in a fellowship dinner in the home of Joe Brown, who is the plaintiff in the lawsuit, which is tantamount to serving as a representative of the congregation since the suit is asking the court to order the elders to disclose the financial affairs of the church to all the congregation. The cook for the

occasion, who prepared the best charcoal steaks in either Arkansas or Texas, was Bob Scott, the attorney who is representing the plaintiff. While I had already read scores of pages of legal briefs regarding the case, this personal contact gave me a better "feel" for what is going on. In the course of the evening I talked with them concerning the issue of freedom and bondage as revealed in the New Testament, and I reminded them that human history is the story of man's struggle to be free. Even in the church's long history, beginning with Jesus himself, the lingering issue has been freedom from oppression. Our Lord was addressing those who were oppressed by the church when he said, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus is still the Lord of liberty to all who respond to that call.

In the class that morning I presented to them an autographed copy of my history book, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, in which I inscribed: *To the "Dirty Dozen" Freedom Riders of the 6th and Izard Church of Christ*, which was my way of acknowledging the dramatic role they are playing in helping to free the Churches of Christ today from the oppression of what might be called "elderocracy."

There are far more than a dozen of them, of course, but it is always a tiny minority that steps out in the name of freedom. They are however "dirty" as folks always are who challenge the arrogance of power. When Jesus confronted the ecclesiastical power structure of his day he was "dirty" with a demon, they said. I've always admired freedom riders, such as helped to integrate Central High School in Little Rock back in the days of Eisenhower, which presaged a great era for civil rights in our nation. And now a few blocks away is a new class of freedom riders — in the Church of Christ, believe it! — that seeks to unhorse the arrogant claims of an entrenched hierarchy. It too may presage a great era of self-examination and soul-searching among Churches of Christ that will revolutionize our thinking about "the eldership" and "the authority of elders" and other matters of church policy.

I want these freedom riders to read my history book so that they can see that they are being true to their great heritage in the Stone-Campbell movement. I explained to them in class that the three independent movements that eventually became a great unity movement and finally became Churches of Christ-Christian Churches were first of all *freedom* movements. The likes of Rice Haggard, James O'Kelley, Thomas Campbell, and Barton Stone were freedom riders! Their first concern was more libertarian than it was doctrinal. Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* reads like the Declaration of

Independence, and Barton Stone's *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* was written "in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty."

The elders at 6th and Izard apparently do not have this high regard for liberty, for they contend in their response to the suit that the members of the congregation do not need to know about the financial affairs of the church and that they as elders have the right to secrecy in such maters. They do not have to give an account to anyone and they are at liberty to spend the church's money as they please. They thus deny what is generally conceded to be a law of both God and man: *the right to know.*

Since the church at 6th and Izard is an Arkansas corporation and subject to the laws thereof, which requires such disclosure (even to the general public if there is sufficient cause!), the elders did not challenge the corporate law of the state in their response to the suit. They rather contend that the law does not apply to them since they are a church and are thus protected by the Constitution's separation of church and state. They contend that the state would be interfering with the doctrinal freedom of the church.

A district court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, with the judge insisting that the case was a matter of "the law of man" and that a church is not exempt from obeying the law because it is a church. The separation of church and state has no relevance to the case, the judge ruled, and so the elders' policy of non-disclosure is illegal. The congregation *does* have the right to know, the judge ruled. Rather than to yield to this decision and thus reveal to their sisters and brothers in the Lord what has happened to *their* money, the elders have appealed the case to the Arkansas Supreme Court.

To us outsiders (as well as to many of the insiders), it would appear that the elders and the minister, who is also an elder, have something to hide. Why this policy of non-disclosure and why this insistence on secrecy? Why this distrust of the congregation? Why not be open and aboveboard?

My acquaintance with this case and the general reaction to it leads me to make these observations:

1. Our reluctance to accept the great principle of servant hood laid down by our Lord: *It shall not be so among you.* Jesus said that in settling a dispute among his disciples over *power.* "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors'." (Lk. 22:25-26) Jesus is saying that in his kingdom the titles

of honor, such as Benefactor, will go to those who are servants. The world thinks in terms of power, control, and authority. *It shall not be so among you!* If we have elders they are to be servants, not power brokers. I am disturbed that Churches of Christ see their elders more in terms of authority figures than as shepherds of a flock.

2. In reading the legal briefs of the Little Rock affair one gets the feel that the elders see themselves as "the church," while the people are the members. One sees this in such notions as "the members do not need to know what the church decides." This confirms my recent essay on "The Roman Catholic Church of Christ," for this is precisely the position of the Roman Catholic Church. It is the hierarchy, the pope and his priests, that is the church, while the people are only adherents. And they too lay claim to authority and secrecy.

3. The elders at 6th and Izard, and it is growing more common, act as if "the eldership" belongs to them. Even if it be granted that there is really any such thing as an "eldership" in the Body of Christ, it belongs to the church, the people, and not to those that hold the office. The church bestows the office and it has the right to take it back if need be. It is an office that can be recalled and given to another. The very fact that an apostle sought to regulate how a "charge against an elder" would be made shows that such charges are sometimes in order (1 Tim. 5:19).

4. Elderocracy among Churches of Christ has gone so far that elders presume to fill their own vacancies. They have become a self-perpetuating corporate board. We have lost the last vestige of democracy when we have no voice over who "rules" over us. It is common among us for an elder to announce who the additional elders are, selected by the sitting "eldership." Sometimes there is a lame gesture toward commonality, with some such statement as, "If there be no objection to these names in the next two weeks, these men will be considered elders." Perhaps that is why the church has no ordination service for elders. We do not ordain them because we do not elect them. In the Churches of Christ elders manufacture other elders by some kind of divine fiat. Roman Catholicism again! Did you ever hear of a Roman Catholic casting a vote for the pope or a priest? The pope selects the cardinals and the cardinals select the pope. But who are we to criticize when we have no voice in either the selection of elders or ministers? In the Church of Christ the elders hire and fire as they please and when they please, and they give account to nobody.

5. We the people are responsible for all this. If we have nothing better, it is because we have not demanded something better. We have elderocracy because we have allowed it. And we often like it that way, for we want others to act for us and to think for us. We want

others to make all the decisions and we do not want to be bothered. Vigilance is still the price of liberty whether in a nation or in a church. No people will be free who love bondage. Democracy is for those who are willing to pay the price for it, *responsibility.*

6. Our institutional eldership has a way of blurring individual responsibility. Whether at 6th and Izard or generally a single elder when approached may be open and conciliatory about any question raised, but it is typical for him to say, "But I am only one elder." The "eldership" may behave in a way that contradicts the moral sensitivity of anyone elder. It is the "organization man" all over again who may do things that the moral man would not do. When one is lost in a crowd, he not only may resort to mob violence but also to stealth, secrecy, and power brokering.

7. There are several lawsuits now pending involving Churches of Christ, most of which have to do with the arrogance of power assumed by elderships. It is noteworthy that our leadership is reluctant to take the side of the people against said elderships, however blatant be the claims of power. Our people all know that what the elders at 6th and Izard claim goes far beyond what we have stood for all these years. But the elders dare not be opposed! "The System" may be threatened! And this in the light of the apostle Paul's warning in Acts 20:30 that it may be elders themselves who will lead us astray. This illustrates how far we have gone with all this nonsense about "the authority of the elders." And yet the New Testament never describes elders in terms of *authority!*

Down the road some years when our people have developed a more responsible polity we will have reason to be grateful to the freedom riders in Little Rock. Even now they serve as the conscience of all those who pay little attention to what is happening to us as a church. Freedom riders have a way of doing that. They embarrass us into conceding that we are about to lose something that is very precious, our freedom in Christ, if we have not lost it already. — *the Editor*

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SHARING WITHOUT FELLOWSHIP

By Cecil Hook

When Freddie Little started visiting our assemblies, we were all happily surprised. For many years he and Sarah, his faithful wife, had gone their separate ways religiously. She was present for every service, and he was equally active as a Baptist. With increasing frequency, however, he came with Sarah and he soon seemed at ease.

In time, Freddie went beyond a more passive participation, for he would enter into the discussions in classes, say “amen” at the conclusion of prayers, sing the invitation song with special earnestness, and invite others to our services. When it was Sarah’s turn to “prepare the communion” (?), he was always right there helping her. Once, when she was ill, he prepared it alone. He helped her with her World Bible School correspondence courses, and he even helped her teach a prospect in their home using film-strip lessons.

Everybody liked Freddie for he was an inspiration to all of us. But a problem developed with Freddie. Because he had been so much a part of us for so long, many newer members thought he was a member. It happened at a midweek service: there was a no-show for the dismissal prayer, and the fellow in charge called on Freddie on the spur of the moment. Freddie led an excellent prayer.

Undertone reaction was immediate, though no one wanted to hurt his feelings. The elders were quick to deal with this serious mistake. At their direction, the minister gave a lesson the next Sunday on “Does God Hear A Sinner’s Prayer?” That settled the congregation fairly well, but Freddie was absent that Sunday and did not hear it. So was the deacon who was newly assigned to be in charge of appointments. So, a few weeks later, this deacon appointed Freddie to help serve the Lord’s Supper. There he was, right there in front of everybody on Sunday morning! The preacher was put on the spot by this, but he wisely decided not to deal with the problem in his sermon which followed.

Freddie still did not know of the problem *he* was causing. Feeling so accepted because of those appointments, he “came forward to place membership” (We speak as the Bible speaks!) in the congregation during the invitation song. The preacher and congregation were so relieved to see him come down the aisle. The eager preacher asked him if he wished to be baptized and to become a Christian. Freddie replied that he had already been baptized and had been a Christian for many years. The whispered discussion between the two was so long that it became embarrassing to those assembled. Finally, the preacher explained as apologetically and tactfully as he could to the assembly that, although we love Freddie and want him to continue to come and share in our services, we cannot have fellowship with him in his present state.

Please forgive me for stringing you along, but Freddie and Sarah Little are fictitious characters. Even though the story is fictitious, it deals with some grave and starkly real problems of ours. It reaveals a strangely inconsistent fantasy that we have about being able to share without fellowship and of mutual participation without communion. Somehow, we

seem to think that having a person's name on the church roll (Where do the Scriptures speak of one?) puts one in our fellowship, but that sharing/communion/mutual participation in our corporate singing, prayer, communion, and giving is not really fellowship. It is sharing without fellowship!

Our words *fellowship* and *communion* are both translated from the same Greek word *koinonia.* This noun means: a sharing in common, partnership, fellowship. Every week there are persons in our assemblies whom we welcome and encourage to participate in our spiritual exercises. They share in common with us; yet we deny that there is fellowship! How can we explain and excuse such a contradiction? If we cannot recognize fellowship with a person, we should not be in fellowship with him or her by mutual participation. To be consistent, we must either accept fellowship with whoever examines himself and has partnership in our activities, or we must examine others and reject from partnership in our activities those whom we judge. There can be no sharing in common without fellowship.

Traditionally, in the Church of Christ, we have practiced "open communion." We invite anyone who wishes to participate in the Lord's Supper. In this participation in the body and blood of Christ, we share the truest experience of communion. We are each sharing in Christ on equal basis, in full partnership. We are one bread, one loaf, one body. Anyone who eats and drinks not giving discernment to the oneness of the body does so unworthily and thus eats and drinks damnation to his soul. For our participation to demonstrate any sentiment of party loyalty or rejection of others in Christ is but to destroy the real purpose and meaning of the communion itself. This moral defect is widespread among us. If each person is to examine himself as his prerequisite to communion, then we must accept him on his self-examination rather than our judgmental examination of him.

To withhold my own judgment of a fellow-communicant and to commune with him on his own self-examination would cause me to commune/have fellowship with one who is in error but thinks that he is not. True. But that person, and everyone else, is doing the same thing when they commune with me! I have not yet reached such a state of self-conceit and self-deception as to think that I am totally free of error. What about you? "I don't know of any error that I believe or practice," you may protest. Neither does the other fellow. You examine yourself and he will examine himself.

Fellowship does not mean approval or sanction. If it should, I truly would be limited in my fellowship, for most of the members of our congregation do things that I disapprove — the judging of others in Christ, for one example! But because others are members of the Church of Christ, wearing the right party label, we feel free to be in fellowship even though those persons are not free from all error.

Why can Freddie Little commune with us but not serve the supper or offer one of the prayers? Is one action fellowship and the other not?

The Scriptures speak neither of a church roll or of people being members of the church, yet we have made this the big issue in fellowship. We can enjoy the fellowship of Freddie in our spiritual exercises but not on the roll. To be consistent, we must either accept him as an equal in Christ or exclude him from participation in the singing, communion, etc. I know that we don't want to face that choice, but we must, if we are to be honest. Freddie cannot share with us without fellowship.

The other fellow's errors are worse than mine; so, I am justified in refusing fellowship, I may rationalize. Such self-righteousness allows one to forget, or ignore, all that Jesus and Paul told us about judging our brother.

Traditionally, we have considered being in the "right church" with doctrinal and practical correctness as the acceptable basis for fellowship, and we have necessarily become judgmental in determining who has met those prerequisites. But the basis of fellowship is the sharing in Christ, and we must accept a person on his or her own profession. If that seems too shaky to you, just remember that you saw few of the persons whom you accept baptized and you don't know their real purposes or heart, yet you accept them on their profession.

"Open membership" is an ugly term among us, but "open communion" is considered praiseworthy! I do not advocate open or closed membership. That puts men as the judges and the church roll at the center of importance. God is the one who adds, or fails to add, members to his body. I do advocate open communion of those whom the Lord has added, for he put us in fellowship in one body. And the only way that I can have reason to believe that a person has been added to the body is by that person's own claim of it.

If I cannot accept one on that basis, then I must exclude him from *our* communion and from participation in our spiritual activities, for there can be no sharing in these things without fellowship.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

You might like to be on Arnold Hardin's mailing list for his *Persuader,* which is a diamond in the rough. He will add your name for the asking. Address: Sceyene Rd. Church of Christ, 2920 Prairie Creek, Dallas, Tx. 75227. I just now dropped Arnold a note about a line in his last issue: "One may be a disciple and yet not a Christian." I agreed with him, but told him I would disagree if it had read; "One may be a disciple *of Christ* and yet not be a Christian." You will appreciate reading him.

Chester Woodhall writes from Zambia, Africa of missionary efforts in Zaire by his assistant, John Ramsey. While the Zaireans have not yet been responsive to the plea for the ancient order, Woodhall and Ramsey are not giving up. Efforts in that part of Africa have been generally successful.

Ray Brinkley (Box 6404, Orlando, FL 32853) has made many visits to India in missionary work. He is now endeavoring to send clothing to India, which is badly needed. Young people in Florida have gathered 19 tons of clothing, so what is now needed is money for shipping. Ray asks for donations as small as $10.00, so you might want to lend a hand. Ray and his wife Evelyn have made great sacrifices in their Indian mission and they are deserving. Ouida and I are sending a donation. Your gift, made out to GO: A Life Sharing Experience, is tax deductible.

The church press across the nation, including the *Arkansas Baptist,* has carried the story of the U.S. Supreme Court refusing to hear an appeal filed by the elders that they had sole authority to hire and fire a minister and to control the congregation's purse strings. When they sought to fire the preacher the church rebelled and in turn moved to dismiss the elders. The lower court ruled against the elders, noting that in a congregational church the people must have a voice in hiring and firing, control of property, election of elders, and finances. The Supreme Court was satisfied with the lower court's ruling. Lawyers among Churches of Christ see this as having a great impact on pending suits among us, where elders are contending that they have final and absolute control of a church and its money. It is unfortunate that the "powers that be" have to make us do what is so obviously right. But it has happened before. It was not until "the law" took over that our Christian colleges integrated.

The *Firm Foundation* (Box 17200, Pensacola, FL 32522) has announced it will run a special issue in which it will respond to my "Open Letter to the Editor of the *Firm Foundation*," which ran in both *One Body* and *Restoration Review.* In the letter I pled for the kind of openness toward those with whom we differ that was shown by that great pioneer, J. W. McGarvey, who while he was non-instrumental music would not make it a test of fellowship. If you want a copy of the special, you might get one by asking.

On a Sunday evening in January members of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ met at the Southwest Christian Church in Ft. Worth and worshipped together. The house was packed and extra chairs were brought in. Jon Jones of Richland Hills Church of Christ was the speaker. Telling about this in *Contact*, a new mailout, J. Paul Du Bois noted that the speaker referred to them all as "We are all brethren in Christ," with no effort to identify some as "brethren in error." Du Bois wrote: "This writer believes that we can and should work together as brothers and sisters in various Christian works. This should require neither group to give up its personal convictions on the music question." For *Contact*, which appears to be free:2408 Villa Vera, Arlington, TX 76017.

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BOOK NOTES

Amy Grant's *Heart to Heart Bible Stories* will thrill the smaller children. The stories are all there, thirty of them from both Testaments, and they are abundantly illustrated in color. The stories have a special touch and are truly heart to heart. The first one, for instance, on creation is entitled "Six Wonderful Days." Try it as a delightful gift for someone with young children. $9.95 postpaid.

College Press has issued two titles of special value in its "What the Bible Says" series. Russell Boatman's *What the Bible Says About the Church* includes vital information on the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, Baptism, Unity, Polity, as well as extensive treatment on the nature of the Ekklesia itself. Then there is *What the Bible Says About Families* by Bill and Judy Norris, which they might have entitled "A Family Affair," which figures since the authors are husband and wife. It makes a resourceful and responsible effort to treat everything the Bible says about the family of Eli and even the family of Pilate. It is a tough discipline in Bible study. These books are $13.95 each and can be ordered separately.

We rejoice that Louis Cochran's historical novels on Alexander Campbell and Elder John Smith are back in print. *The Fool of God* captures not only Campbell and his times but what he was out to do, and it is enormously interesting. So with *Raccoon John Smith,* which tells of pioneer America as well as pioneer preacher. You will fall in love with Raccoon, and laugh and weep with him. You better acquire these titles while they are in print if you are interested. They are $11.95 each, postpaid.

We now have William Barclay's *The Promise of the Spirit* in inexpensive paperback. Alexander Campbell once said that the best way to learn about the Holy Spirit is to study every passage in the New Testament that mentions it. This is what Barclay does, and he treats Greek meanings in a way that you can understand and appreciate. $5.95 postpaid.

If you have not yet read Leroy Garrett's *The Stone-Campbell Movement,* we urge you to consider doing so. We continue to receive enthusiastic responses, some telling us that they read it again and again. We are certain you will have a better understanding and appreciation of your heritage in Churches of Christ/Christian Churches if you allow this anecdotal history to tell you the story of what happened. There are two ways to get a copy. Send a check for $21.95 and we will send you the book postage paid. Or you receive a copy free gratis by sending us a list of eight subscriptions (including your own or renewal) at $3.00 per name, $24.00 total. But you *must* with your list of subs request the book, for we get many lists of subs.

You might also be interested in bound volumes of this journal, which go back to 1977. Earlier volumes are out of print. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978) are $5.95 each; *Blessed Are the Peacemakers/With All the Mind* (1979-80), *Jesus Today* (1981-82), and *The Doe of the Dawn* (1983-84) are double volumes (two years in one binding) and are $10.50 each. We are presently offering all five volumes, covering eight years, for only $35.00, postpaid if you remit in advance.

When you send us a change of address be sure to send both your old and new addresses, for we locate you in our files by zip code and not by name.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Are you interested in joining me as I start a new denomination? We should call it The Generic Church. It will of course be the only path to unity if others will stop their nonsense and join us. You can be the pope. — *Danny New, Long Branch, Tx 75669.*

(I am reminded of the response made by that great economist, Ludwig von Mises, when asked what he would do if he were made dictator of the world. "Abdicate!," he said. So if I somehow become a pope, my first official act would be to resign. Since generic means inclusive or general or "the whole thing," the church is already generic. But in your jest you name the sin of sectarianism: it emphasizes some part to the neglect of the whole. — *Ed.)*

In re-reading your Stone-Campbell Movement I was reminded of a significant meeting back when I first came to Louisville in 1939.Daniel Sommer accepted E. L. Jorgenson's invitation to speak at his church. He spoke for three nights, and on the third night a kindly looking, white-haired gentleman stood to pay his respects to Sommer. This was the first time I saw R.H. Boll. Daniel Sommer speaking at a so-called premillennial church at the invitation of E. L. Jorgenson and with R.H. Boll giving his blessing was a novelty. But I did not realize the novelty of it back then since I knew nothing of the dispute. This was before Sommer suffered blindness. Your book tells how Sommer made some enormous changes for the good. I recall being impressed by his fine spirit. — *Ernest Lyon, Louisville, KY.*

(I too saw Sommer that same year when he came to Freed-Hardeman College while I was a student there. I recall his booming voice and commanding presence, and the way he held his Bible against his chest and began by bellowing "Disciples of the Savior!" I suspect we were all afraid of him and we were certainly not aware of the history unfolding before us. — *Ed.)*

May God bless you abundantly and may this be the year of His coming. Enclosed is a check to renew my sub. For I do not want to miss an issue or a bound volume. *Great Songs of the Church, Revised* will make its appearance in February, *Deo volente.* This will culmi-

nate five years of labor of love on my part. May God be pleased to use it to His glory. The first copies will be in the auditorium for use at the ACU lectures. —*Forrest McCann, Abilene, TX.*

(Great Songs of the Church is almost certainly the most important hymnal in the history of Churches of Christ, and I am pleased that a revised edition is at hand. I recall visiting with the original compiler of the hymnal, E.L. Jorgenson, and talking with him about the hymnal, to which he gave a lifetime of labor. It was important to him that our churches have a quality hymnal. If your church is interested in this revised edition, you might write to Dr. McCann at ACU Station, Abilene, TX 79699. By the way, brother Jorgenson, like brother McCann, believed strongly in the imminent coming of our Lord. Strangely enough, the hope of His coming is rarely referred to in our prayers at church. Have we let this hope slip? — *Ed.)*

I know that God through Christ understands, loves, and cares for his people. So despite the deep grief and loneliness I feel the warmth of God's love and seek it more now than ever before in my life. I now live alone in the little house which she and I shared the past 35 years, and though I will not become a recluse I do enjoy some time with the feeling that she is still near me. —*David Bobo, Indianapolis, IN*

(This letter, dated 29 August, was in reference to the passing of David's beloved wife, Madolin. We regret to inform you that David also died a few weeks later. Longtime minister to the Fountain Square Church of Christ and part-time instructor in biblical languages in area seminaries, David was a man for all seasons, full of the Spirit and free in the Lord. The Churches of Christ of tomorrow, when they at last remember their real heroes of the past, will honor David Bobo more than the Churches of Christ today have honored him. But I applaud his noble work now in death as I applauded it when he lived. — *Ed.)*

After years of faithfulness to the Church of Christ jots and tittles, and having served as an all-wise elder reading *Firm Foundation, Gospel Advocate, Contending for the Faith,* I am out of my bondage and able to tolerate all those who love the Lord and seek after his glory. I cried, I hurt when I came to realize the very unity we expounded is unity we would and could not allow to happen. For several years I have studied the word to let it teach me without any help except the Greek text. I had come a long way, but then a friend handed me *Free In Christ* and the walls of bondage came down. I never heard of your publication until I began to search. — *Roger Woodward, Jr., Enid, OK*

(You may receive a free copy of *Free In Christ* by writing to Cecil Hook, 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX, 78130. — *Ed.)*

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